

The “Ecclesia”

Anytime this lesson refers to a person or people who have been “called out” it is with reference to a Christian or multiple Christians unless otherwise stated, all who profess Christ and understand their calling and who wholeheartedly adhere to that calling to the best of their ability. The English word that we use for “ecclesia” is church. But what does the word church mean. Webster’s first definition is: a building for public worship, esp. Christian worship. But what did the New Testament writers have in mind when they penned the word “ecclesia” since church buildings didn’t even exist until around the middle of the third century? “Ecclesia” is a compound of one word and a derivative of another which means a “calling out”.

Gk.1577 ἐκκλησία ekklēsia *ek-klay-see'-ah*

From G1537 and G2564; a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth ...): - assembly, church.

Thayer Definition:

1d) in a Christian sense

1d1) an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting

1d4) the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth

Gk.1537 ἐκ, ἐξ ek ex *ek, ex*

Denoting *origin* (the point *whence* motion or action proceeds), *from*, *out* (of place, time or cause; literally or figuratively; direct or remote):

Gk.2564 καλέω kaleō *kal-eh'-o*

To “call” (properly aloud, but used in a variety of applications, directly or otherwise): - bid, call (forth), (whose, whose sur-) name (was [called]).

These two Greek words together form our English word “church” which is used interchangeably with the word “congregation”. In the Old Testament we find the word “congregation” used either as referring to the children of Israel in general (*Heb.5712*) or as a specific assembly (*Heb.4150*) coming together at a fixed time, specifically for a festival. Acts 7 gives an example of the first meaning.

Act 7:37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.' 38 This is the one who was in the congregation (*Gk.1577-church*) in the wilderness with the angel Who spoke to him at Mount Sinai...

The Israelites were the “ecclesia”, or called out, of the Old Testament of which Moses was a part. God called them out of all the nations, not that they were more righteous than the others (*Deu 9:4-7*) but for the purpose of having a separated people through whom He would send His Son.

Called out from what?

Since it is to be understood that the word has to do with both a “calling” and an “origin” from which one is being called, added together we get the term “the called out”. But what are we called out from?

2Co 6:16 What agreement has the temple of God (*the church*) with idols? For **we** are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 17 Therefore **go out from** their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.” (*emp. added*)

If we are called out from one place, way of life, behavior (*etc.*) then we must be called “to” something different. Otherwise there would be no desire to leave our present place, way of life, behavior (*etc.*).

Col 1:13 He has delivered us **from** the domain of darkness and **transferred** us **to** the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (*emp. added*)

What we leave doesn't compare with what we receive. Once called out from the world, here calling it “the domain of darkness”, God has “transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”, the church, which is where we then receive something worth more than physical gold and silver. What we receive are the “spiritual blessings” (*Eph 1:3*) to be found only in Christ.

The calling

What is the mode in which we are called (*how are we called*)?

2Th 2:13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 14 To this He **called you through our Gospel**, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*emp. added*)

And how will I hear it?

Rom 10:14 How then will they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of **Whom they have never heard**? And how are they to hear without someone **preaching**? (*emp. added*)

1Co 15:1 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the **Gospel I preached** to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, **if** you hold fast to the word I **preached** to you--unless you believed in vain. (*emp. added*)

1Co 1:18 For the word of the cross (*the Gospel*) is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (*Rom 1:16*)

That we are called out of the worldly way of doing things will be noticed by others since the world looks at the faith as folly and superstition, especially by those professing atheism; such moral conduct as Christians will either be welcomed or rejected. But how we handle each situation in life, as with regards to the “unbelievers”, will determine the strength of our own personal faith in Christ. After all, aren't we supposed to emulate Him? Aren't we called by His name, Christian? (*Act 11:26*)

Names referring to the “called out” in the New Testament

Saints

One name that seems to have been hijacked by Roman Catholicism is the word “saint”. It has been elevated to a position of authority and to be earned by dead men and women who became such, simply speaking, once a miraculous occurrence was attributed to their supposedly answering a prayer. Such goes against what the Bible teaches, in that all our prayers are to go through **only** Jesus.

Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Eph 5:20 giving thanks **always and for everything** to God the Father **in the name** (Gk.3686- *authority*) **of** our Lord Jesus Christ, (*emp. added*)

To use “saint” then should be with reference to **all** the “called out” once sanctified since “saint” means “sacred (consecrated): -holy. When we answer the Gospel call to be saved, once obedient to its message we become separated from the rest of the world and thus “sanctified”. So, let’s look at some New Testament examples of how this word is used. Let’s disregard what mere, uninspired men say and ask “what does the Bible say”?

Rom 1:7 to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints**: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (*emp. added*) (“to be” is not in the original manuscript.)

Paul here is addressing the church that met in Rome (*pre-Roman Catholic*) referring to them as “saints”. He wasn’t addressing dead people. Thayer defines the word saint in this verse as “set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His”. “Just as the Israelites claimed for themselves the title of ‘holy’, because God selected them from the other nations to lead a life acceptable to Him ..., so this appellation (*designation*) is very often in the N.T. transferred to Christians, as those whom God has selected ‘of the world’, that under the influence of the Holy Spirit they may be rendered, through holiness, partakers of salvation in the kingdom of God”.

Saints, Christians

Act 11:26 ... in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians (Gk.5546- *follower of Christ*).

In most denominational teachings, today’s physical Jews, as was O.T. Israel, are still to be considered God’s chosen people. How they come up with such ideas is beyond understanding when one “rightly divides the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).

Rom 2:28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Rom 11:26 And in this way **all Israel will be saved**, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; 27 “and this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins.” (*emp. added*)

If the Jew is to be considered God’s chosen today it would be understood that his status as such would have to be as a **spiritual** Jew, whether he was a Jew or Gentile to begin with wouldn’t matter. Once a person has been identified with Christ, having put Him on in baptism (*Gal*

3:27), only then will they be considered a spiritual Jew and only then can they be considered “a new creation”.

2Co 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is **in** Christ, he is a **new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (*emp. added*)

Gal 6:15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creation**. 16 And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the **Israel of God**. (*emp. added*)

Not all Israel from the standpoint of being born under the Old Covenant will be the Israel that is born into the New Covenant. Not all people, who are part of the Jewish nation, are members of the church the **true** Israel of God. (*Rom 9:6; 11:23-24*)

Saints, Christians, Brethren

Mat 23:8 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one Teacher, and you are all **brothers**. 9 And call no man your (*spiritual*) father on earth, for you have one Father, Who is in Heaven. (*emp. added*)

“Jesus forbade His disciples to seek such titles of distinction. The reason which He gave was that He was Himself their Master and Teacher; they were on a level; they were to be equal in authority; **they were brethren**; and they should neither covet nor receive a title which implied either an elevation of one above another, or which appeared to infringe on the absolute right of the Saviour to be their only Teacher and Master.” (*emp. added*) Albert Barnes

With it now being understood who the “called out” are, and a few distinctions concerning us, we next need to look at the way others look at us. Do they see a difference in our behavior since we’ve become part of those who have been set apart from the rest of the world? Remember, we don’t become better than everyone else because we’ve all “sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (*Rom 3:23*). God’s love for the world was His reason for sending Jesus to save **all** people, even though **all** people won’t be saved.

What we leave behind.

Obviously, when we’ve been called out from the world there’s a certain amount of baggage that we need to leave behind. In different passages the apostle Paul gave lists which are not to be considered comprehensive. In Gal 5:21, after giving such a list he concluded with “and things like these” as a way of **not** giving certain sins a pass. And we all know what things are to be considered sin if we are “a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (*2 Tim 2:15*).

1Co 6:9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such **were** some of you. **But** you were washed, you were **sanctified**, you were **justified** in the name (*Gk.3686-authority*) of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (*emp. added*) (*Rev 21:27; 22:15*)

What we gain, both now and in the future.

We need not wait until Jesus reclaims His bride for the “called out” to receive certain blessings while here in the flesh. A very important blessing we are assured of is knowing we “have eternal life” (1 Jn 5:13). But there is another blessing that many in the church may not be aware of, have never had to rely on or some might not know of it because of the lack of Christ-centered fellowship within the congregation they belong to. Do you realize that the moment you became a N.T. Christian, your family increased manifold, so much so that you may not have enough place settings to invite us all over for a family dinner?

Mat 19:29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for My name's sake, will receive a **hundredfold** and will inherit eternal life. (*Mk 19:29 adds, “now in this time”.*) (*emp. added*)

Once we decide to become a part of the “called out” we should never go without. Whether that means food, clothing, shelter or personal relationships, once we become adopted into the family of Christ through the precious price He paid for us with the blood of the covenant (*Mat 26:28*), along with our continued obedience to that covenant, we should never lack in anything.

Heb 13:5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

But the ultimate goal of every human being on the face of the earth should be eternal life in Heaven. Sadly, “the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many” (*Mat 7:13*). Many will not enjoy what so few strive to hold on to. And that’s hope.

Eph 4:4 There is one body (*the ecclesia, the called out, the church*) and one Spirit--just as you were called to **the one hope** (*Gk.1680- expectation*) that belongs to your call-- (*emp. added*)

Only those who have answered the Gospel call have the hope that belongs to that calling. And we should all look forward to losing that hope someday. “What?!” “Are you kidding?”

1Co 13:13 But **now** abideth faith, hope (*Gk.1680- [to anticipate, usually with pleasure]; expectation or confidence*), love, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (*emp. added*)

Faith and hope are necessary in this life but will be revealed in the next. We will no longer expect something once we see it in person. The moment the **faithful** saint loses hope at death is the moment Paradise is no longer just an expectation, it is a reality. And speaking of the ultimate goal...

Php 3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God **in** Christ Jesus. (*emp. added*)

“God has called us to great and noble efforts; to a career of true honor and glory; to the obtainment of a bright and imperishable crown. It is a calling which is ‘high,’ or ‘upward’ ... The calling of the Christian is from Heaven... He has been summoned by God through the gospel of the Lord Jesus to secure the crown.” “It may be his, if he will not faint or tire or look backward. It demands his highest efforts, and it is worth all the exertions which a mortal can make even in the longest life.”

Albert Barnes

Humble calling

God has never called, or catered to, what society considers the best or the elitist of all people. He looks to the downtrodden, the poor and meek of the earth as being a source of spiritual strength in making up the inhabitants of His kingdom.

1Co 1:26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

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